Use Your Asthma Device Correctly

Inhalers are the most effective way to get life-saving medications to people with asthma, but a recent study found that most people don’t use their inhaler correctly.

Using an inhaler correctly helps you control your condition and may reduce the amount of medication you need.

To make sure you’re using your inhaler correctly, take it with you to your next appointment with your primary care provider (PCP). Show your PCP how you use it. Your PCP can make sure you’re using the right technique.

There are three types of asthma devices:
• Inhalers and spacers.
• Nebulizers.
• Dry powder inhalers.

Metered-dose Inhaler (MDI)
Proventil® HFA, Ventolin® HFA, and albuterol MDI or Flovent® HFA

Here are instructions from nlm.nih.gov:
1. If the MDI is new, hasn’t been used for a while, or was dropped, it needs to be primed. Priming means discarding the first few doses or puffs before using the inhaler to make sure that the dose you take has the expected amount of medication. Check the instructions that came with the inhaler for how to do this.
2. Shake the inhaler well.
3. Breathe out all the way.
4. Hold the inhaler 1 to 2 inches in front of your open mouth.
5. Breathe in slowly through your mouth, then press down on the inhaler one time.
6. Continue to breathe in slowly and deeply.
7. If you can, hold your breath as you slowly count to 10.
8. If you need more doses of the medication, repeat the steps. If you’re using a bronchodilator inhaler, wait 1 minute between puffs. If you’re using inhaled steroids, you don’t need to wait between puffs.

Spacer

A spacer (a holding chamber) makes it easier to use the MDI. Here are instructions from mayoclinic.org:
1. Remove the cap of the MDI and attach the MDI to the spacer.
2. Shake MDI well.
3. Put your lips and teeth over the spacer and breathe in slowly. As you breathe in, squeeze the top of the inhaler once. Keep inhaling even after you finish squeezing the inhaler.
4. Continue inhaling slowly and deeply. After inhaling, remove the spacer from your mouth and hold your breath for up to 10 seconds.
5. If you need another dose of medication, repeat the steps. If you have a bronchodilator (albuterol) inhaler, wait 1 minute between puffs. You don’t need to wait between puffs of inhaled steroids. Rinse your mouth with water after using a steroid inhaler.
To use the inhalation solution in the nebulizer:
- Use one container of solution or mix the exact amount of solution using the dropper provided for each dose.
- Place the inhalation solution in the medicine reservoir or nebulizer cup on the machine.
- Connect the nebulizer to the face mask or mouthpiece.
- Use the face mask or mouthpiece to breathe in the medicine.
- Use the nebulizer for 5 to 15 minutes or until the medicine in the nebulizer cup is gone.
- Clean all the parts of the nebulizer after each use.

Dry Powder Inhalers
Serevent Diskus®, Pulmicort Turbuhaler®, Flovent Rotadisk®, Advair Diskus®, and Ellipta®.

Dry powder inhalers:
- Don’t need spacers.
- Don’t need shaking before use.
- Usually have built-in counters that tell you how many inhalations are remaining.
- Don’t give a “blast” at the back of your throat. Instead, you’ll feel like you’re simply breathing.

Serevent Diskus (mayoclinic.org)
1. To open the Diskus, push the thumb grip away from you until it clicks. If you close it or push the lever again, you will lose medicine.
2. Turn your head away from the Diskus and breathe out to the end of a normal breath. Don’t breathe into the Diskus.
3. Hold the Diskus level and put the mouthpiece between your lips and teeth. Close your lips around the mouthpiece. Don’t block the mouthpiece with your teeth or tongue.
4. Breathe in through your mouth as deeply as you can until you’ve taken a full breath. Don’t breathe through your nose.
5. Hold your breath and remove the mouthpiece from your mouth. Continue holding your breath as long as you can – up to 10 seconds – before breathing out slowly.
6. Turn your head away from the Diskus and breathe out slowly to the end of a normal breath. Don’t breathe into the Diskus.
7. If your doctor told you to inhale more than one puff for each dose, take the second puff using the same steps you used for the first puff.
8. When you’re finished, place your thumb on the thumb grip and slide it back toward you until it clicks.
9. Keep the Diskus dry. Don’t wash the mouthpiece or any other part of the Diskus. Use a dry cloth to wipe it clean.
10. The Diskus has a window that shows the number of doses that are left. When the Diskus has five doses left, the number will show up in red to remind you to refill your prescription.

Flovent Rotadisk and Ellipta (mayoclinic.org)
1. This medicine comes in a foil tray. Peel back the lid to open the tray.
2. Slide the inhaler cover down until you hear a clicking sound. Don’t open the cover of the inhaler until you are ready to use it. If you open and close the inhaler without inhaling the dose, you’ll lose a dose of the medicine.
3. Turn your head away from the inhaler and breathe out fully. Don’t breathe into the inhaler.
4. Put the mouthpiece between your lips and close your lips around the mouthpiece. Don’t block the air vent with your fingers.
5. Breathe in through your mouth as deeply as you can until you’ve taken a full deep breath. Don’t breathe in through your nose.
6. Hold your breath and remove the mouthpiece from your mouth. Continue holding your breath as long as you can – up to 3 or 4 seconds – before breathing out slowly.
7. When you’re done, clean the mouthpiece with a dry tissue before closing the inhaler cover.
8. The inhaler has a window that shows the number of doses that are left. This tells you when you’re getting low on medicine. When the inhaler has less than 10 doses left, the left half of the counter will show up in red to remind you to refill your prescription.

Pulmicort Turbuhaler (mayoclinic.org)
If the Turbuhaler is new, hasn’t been used for seven days or more, or was dropped, it may not give you the right amount of medicine with the first puff. Before using the inhaler, prime it by spraying the medicine two times into the air away from your face, then shake the inhaler well for 5 seconds before each spray.
1. Take the inhaler out of the foil pouch.
2. To prime the inhaler, shake it well for 5 seconds and release a test spray. Shake it again and release a second test spray.
3. Breathe out to the end of a normal breath. Don’t breathe into the inhaler.
4. Holding the inhaler level, put the mouthpiece in your mouth and close your lips around it. Don’t block the mouthpiece with your teeth or tongue.
5. While pressing down firmly on the top of the inhaler, breathe in through your mouth as deeply as you can until you’ve taken a full, deep breath.
6. Hold your breath and remove the mouthpiece from your mouth. Continue holding your breath as long as you can – up to 10 seconds – before breathing out slowly.
7. Release your finger from the top and turn your head away from the inhaler. Breathe out slowly to the end of a normal breath. Don’t breathe into the inhaler.
8. Shake the inhaler again for 5 seconds and take the second puff following the same steps you used for the first puff.
9. Replace the mouthpiece cover.
10. Gargle and rinse your mouth with water after each dose; this will help prevent hoarseness, throat irritation, and infection. Don’t swallow the water after rinsing.

Pulmicort Turbuhaler comes with a dose tracker card to track the number of puffs you’ve used. Mark off or punch through each of your morning and evening doses. You must throw away the inhaler after you’ve used the number of inhalations on the product label and box or within three months of opening the foil pouch. Clean the inhaler once a week by wiping the mouthpiece with dry cloth. You must use a new inhaler with each refill of your medicine.